	Agency Name	Department of Social Services (DSS)
	Chapter No./Name	DSS Policy Manual
	Part No./Name	1/Administrative/Fiscal
	Section No./Name	1-24/DSS Correspondence
	Document No./Name	1-24/DSS Correspondence
	Effective Date	10/4/07

I. STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the policy of the Department of Social Services to utilize a standard format for issuing correspondence from an appointing authority within the department.

Correspondence is an important instrument of communications and public relations and an essential tool in providing services and obtaining information. An opinion of the department is often formed from the content and appearance of correspondence. It is therefore imperative that correspondence prepared on behalf of the department's appointing authorities contain key elements of composition including:

- Accuracy
- clear, simple style
- language suited to the understanding of the person to whom the letter is written
- correct spelling and punctuation
- correct sentence structure
- paragraphing conducive to easy reading
- courteous tone
- good format
- neatness
- sufficient information to ensure thorough understanding on the part of the recipient
- promptness in reply

II. APPLICABILITY

This policy shall apply to all offices of the Department of Social Services.

III. IMPLEMENTATION


Implementation of this policy and any subsequent revisions shall become effective on the date signed by the Secretary of the Department of Social Services.

IV. TYPES OF CORRESPONDENCE

A. Letters

Letters are written to give and to seek information, to make appointments, and to confirm conferences with persons or organizations outside the department.

- Drafting Procedures
 1. Use departmental stationery when preparing letters on behalf of the Secretary. The DSS letterhead stationery is available through the On-Line Policy Management System (OPMS) in DSS Policy 1-1 Departmental


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Stationery. Employees must log into the system to access the document as it is a secure document and unavailable to the public.

2. For all other letters, the required signature on the prepared correspondence determines the specific letterhead stationery to use. For example, the Executive Director of Support Enforcement Services (SES) Division composes a letter relating to an SES-specific issue that will be signed by the Deputy Secretary. The letter is printed on the Deputy Secretary's letterhead stationery.

If the necessary letterhead stationery is not available through the OPMS, contact the appropriate agency for assistance.

3. Letters to another organization or agency should be addressed to the executive head of the agency. Include his/her title and organization or agency. Exception: If the correspondence is in reply to an inquiry in which the inquiring organization or agency specifies a different procedure, follow those requested procedures.
4. In replying, attention should usually be directed to the person who sent the initial request. If the request comes through a second party, the reply should be addressed to the initial requestor with the second party copied. Example: A client writes a letter to their senator requesting assistance with his application for benefits. The senator's office forwards the client's letter to the DSS Secretary with their own cover letter inquiring on the status of the application. The response from DSS should be directed to the claimant with a copy to the senator's office.
5. A letter written to an individual, including a form letter to a client, must include a courtesy or formal title (Mr., Ms., or professional title), name and mailing address.
6. Reference initials must appear on the bottom of the letter when typed by someone other than the writer. Type the initials of the letter signor, the author and the typist at the left margin, on the second line below the sender's name and title. If the author wants his/her initials used, type these first followed by the initials of the typist. Example: John Doe types a letter signed by Jane Smith that was written by Mary Brown. Notation should be shown as JS/MB/jd. The typist's initials should be in lower-case letters.
7. A copy notation is made when one or more persons will receive a copy of the letter. Type the initial "c" at the left margin below the enclosure

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notation or reference initials whichever comes last. Retain one copy of the letter for the department file.

- **Signing Procedures**

1. Letters to public officials, other social agencies and organizations must be signed by the director or a responsible supervisory person designated by the appointing authority. If another employee is authorized to sign correspondence, the signer's initials should follow the signature.
2. Form letters to clients or other persons may be signed by the DSS employee/caseworker/caseworker assistant. A composed letter regarding a case action should be co-signed by the employee's supervisor.

B. Memoranda

A memorandum is most often used to request or give information to other offices within the department. An Interoffice Communication (IOC) form may be used within an office or between offices for less formal correspondence.

- **Formatting Procedures**

This correspondence should be formatted routinely as MEMORANDUM followed by TO:, FROM:, and RE: sections. If correspondence requires direction to a particular person within an office other than the person indicated in the TO: line, an ATTENTION: line should follow the FROM: line.

- **Copying Procedures**

A copy notation is made when one or more persons will receive a copy of the memorandum. Type the initial "c" at the left margin below the enclosure notation or reference initials whichever comes last. Retain one copy of the memorandum for the department file.

- **Signing Procedures**

The appointing authority or designee must initial all official correspondence. Official correspondence includes all administrative matters. The name and title of the employee from whom the correspondence originates should be shown in a BY: line immediately following the FROM: line.

When a memorandum is distributed via electronic mail, the signed version of the document should be scanned and attached to the email so that the official version of the document is distributed.